

DAMIAN STAYNE

Founder of the Cor et Lumen Christi a Catholic Charismatic Community

Intimacy with God through the Holy Eucharist and the Holy Name of Jesus

In the Old Testament, the most intimate meeting place with God on the earth was the Holy of Holies. Here, in the Temple on the Day of Atonement, the most sacred acts of the High Priest were performed concealed behind the great veil. Among these were the offering of the sacrifice and the utterance of the divine name. At the moment of Jesus' death, this great veil was torn open from top to bottom, symbolising a new covenant in which the cross provides, for all, intimate access to the presence and mercy of the living God. These two acts established to obtain communion with God, the offering of sacrifice and the utterance of His Name, are now made accessible to the entire people of God in the New Covenant. While respecting the distinctiveness of the ministerial priesthood, each Christian, through their baptism, becomes part of a priestly people and can thus participate in the sacrificial offering of Christ and the prayer of the Holy Name.

In this presentation, I am going to address the call to intimacy with God in the Holy Eucharist and through the Holy Name of Jesus. The Church has always upheld the necessity of both the Holy Eucharist and the life of personal prayer for all Christians. These offer us two different but complementary dimensions of Christian prayer: sacramental and contemplative, communal and personal.

While this invitation is always relevant, perhaps it is especially important in moments of history when access to the Lord's presence in the Holy Eucharist is under threat for millions of Catholics as it has been in a particular way in recent times. I remember saying to our community regularly "Enter into this Holy Mass as if it were your last." Then, suddenly, access to Holy Mass was no longer permitted because of Covid-19. If such a situation was to be repeated, or an even worse

situation arose in the future, the people of God could find themselves in a situation of spiritual starvation. Therefore, we need to be equipped to draw more deeply from each Eucharist that we celebrate and cultivated other ways of living in contact with the power of God's holy presence in a deeper personal way.

In this talk, I will propose that the prayer of the Holy Name of Jesus can offer something wonderful in this regard. Even if such a threat is never realised, I believe our celebration of the Holy Eucharist and prayer in the power of the Name, if lived in love from the heart, can enrich each other beautifully. I hope this presentation will enflame you with a deeper love of Jesus' presence in the Holy Eucharist and inspire you to live more deeply in his abiding presence through the prayer of The Name.

Intimacy with God through the Holy Eucharist

Intimacy is all to do with the heart. The word intimacy comes from the Latin *intimus* literally meaning *inmost* but can also mean *innermost* or *deepest*. The heart has been traditionally seen as the deepest centre of the human person and, therefore, without the heart true intimacy is impossible.

In the New Testament, Jesus describes his body as the true Temple (Jn 2:21). What, then, is the new Holy of Holies within that living temple if not the heart of Christ, which was torn open for us upon the cross?

In Saint Margaret Mary's visions of the Sacred Heart, the Holy Eucharist and the Heart of Jesus are presented by Christ as synonymous. It seems significant that these visions began on the feast of Saint John the Beloved who, of all the apostles, was the one who's Eucharistic experience at the Last Supper was intimately linked to the heart of Jesus upon which he lay.

The preacher to the papal household, Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, writes "*Communion, therefore, opens as it were, successive doors to us, by which we first of all enter into Christ's heart and then, through him, into the heart of the Trinity itself.*"¹

Such an understanding is further confirmed through numerous Eucharistic miracles in which the host is changed into human flesh. But

what kind of flesh has it become? Scientific examination has revealed this flesh to be the flesh of a human heart.

God is calling us to such a deep heart to heart intimacy with himself in the Holy Eucharist, that it is described by scripture (Rev 19:7) and the writings of the saints as a nuptial union.

Saint Theodoret teaches us: *“In eating the elements of the bridegroom and drinking his blood, we accomplish a marriage union.”*²

The intimacy of married couples in their nuptial embrace, sacred and beautiful as it is, points beyond itself to the mystical and bridal union that God has prepared for us in Christ and which is available to us in the Holy Eucharist, for we are truly *“children of the bridal chamber”*.³

This dimension was not lost on Saint Therese when she made her First Holy Communion, as she recalls *“How sweet was that first kiss of Jesus! It was a kiss of love”*.⁴

A trusted member of our community once had an experience during the singing of Psalm 63, at Morning Prayer, on the feast of Saint Teresa of Avilla. This experience, I believe, can shed light upon some keys to intimacy with God in the Holy Eucharist: *As we sang ‘Oh God you are my God for you I long, for you my soul is thirsting, my body pines for you like a dry weary land without water. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory...’ I received a deep conviction that this was not at all the state of my longing for God. I cried out in repentance and begged the Lord to give me the thirst of the psalmist. After a couple of minutes of sincere prayer, I felt some kind of power begin to fill my body, something like an irresistible force. I did not know what this was. However, when it reached and filled my heart, I suddenly knew it to be a tremendously powerful desire but not one that was my own. This experience of filling continued until my whole being was flooded with this great desire. As soon as my entire body was filled I immediately experienced, to my great surprise, my spirit leaving my body and “travelling” steadily forward towards the tabernacle a few metres away. I could see my body where it stood behind me and yet at the same time I was, in my spirit, moving through the air towards the tabernacle. I wondered what would happen when I arrived at the tabernacle. At the moment I reached the tabernacle doors I experienced my spirit passing through them as through two great curtains and I then saw myself in a beautiful bedroom.*

I could not see any person there but immediately, there in the tabernacle, great waves of love began flowing over and through me. As I experienced this happening in my spirit in the tabernacle, I simultaneously experienced living water flowing through and flooding every part of my body, bringing with it an immense experience of the love of Christ. I was overcome and wept with deep love and joy for a prolonged time.

Such encounters confirm the teaching of the Church and remind us of the *Song of Songs*: “*The king has brought me into his chambers. You will be our love and our joy, how right it is to love you*” (*Song of Songs* 1:4).

The experience just shared reveals to us two essential components in our search for intimacy with the Eucharistic Jesus: humility and desire.

The Saints, likewise aware of their need and the great beauty hidden in the Eucharistic mystery are consumed with a thirst for Jesus in Holy Communion. So great is its consolation that all sufferings appear as nothing in comparison.

Saint Margaret Mary writes: *I had such desire for Holy Communion that had I to walk barefoot over flames, it seems to me the pain would cost me nothing compared with the pain of being deprived of this happiness. Nothing is capable of giving me so much sensible joy as the reception of the Bread of Life.*⁵

St Therese in a time of deep trial declared “*Oh, what are these sufferings to me in comparison with one daily Holy Communion?*”⁶

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina confides: *My heart feels drawn by a higher force each morning before I am united with him in the Blessed Sacrament. I have such a hunger and thirst before I receive him that I almost die.*⁷

When Saint Pio speaks of a “higher force”, drawing him into the depths of love in the Holy Eucharist perhaps we can assume this to be the Holy Spirit. Saint Symeon the New Theologian articulates this belief declaring of the Holy Spirit “*You yourself are the desire within me.*”⁸

If we wish to grow in intimacy with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist then we need to begin by fostering this holy desire and imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit. As Saint Augustine writes: “*The more desire dilates the heart the more able we become to welcome God.*”⁹

There seem to be two widespread obstacles to this desire for deep communion with Jesus in the Holy Mass, both related to humility:

- First, a lack of humility and a lack of a sense of unworthiness to partake in such a wonder. This often reveals itself in a casual complacency.
- Secondly, the absence of hope or expectant faith, often born of a false kind of humility, that believes we cannot hope to enjoy an experience of the living Jesus in the mass and the reception of Holy Communion as so many of the Saints did.

To answer these, I believe we need to encourage a form of Eucharistic catechises that, while emphasising the extraordinary majesty of the Holy Mass, effectively encourages expectant faith that a profound experience of divine intimacy is available to us as it was to the Saints in this holy mystery. As Cardinal Ratzinger has strikingly written: *“A dogmatic faith unsupported by personal experience remains empty.”*¹⁰

Surely, therefore, as the Holy Eucharist is the greatest treasure of the Church, it should be in the Eucharistic celebration that the people of God most deeply and consciously experience intimacy with God’s love and glory. For this to take place the way we celebrate the Holy Mass needs to *make room for the response of the heart*. Every moment and every word of the Mass is loaded with dynamic power, but how often do we allow ourselves to be vulnerable to that power? This power begins with the very first word of the Holy Mass and this was powerfully demonstrated to us in the following experience of someone I know: *We were attending a normal 30 minute weekday mass in our parish. As we entered I spoke to my friends and reminded them “Remember the Kingdom is coming down now in this mass.” We then proceeded, as usual, to begin with the sign of the cross. As I spoke the words “In the name of the Father...” something of the wonder of God the Father struck my heart. I yielded to this and it immediately became very powerful and I was enwrapped in the presence of God in profound awe and joy. I remained in this state throughout the mass. This experience caused my reception of communion at that mass to be very deep and this beautiful grace remained strongly with me throughout the entire day.*

It is worth asking ourselves, when was the last time in our celebration of the Holy Mass that we were moved to awe, tears, joy, gratitude, or deep love, as so many of the Saints were during the Mass? Lest we consider such responses inappropriate or beyond us, let us hear what

Saint Pope John Paul II taught in his Apostolic Letter *Mane Nobiscum Domine* in which he stresses that the Saints truly are our examples in this matter: *31. We have before us the example of the Saints, who in the Eucharist found nourishment on their journey towards perfection. How many times did they shed tears of profound emotion in the presence of this great mystery, or experience hours of inexpressible “spousal” joy before the sacrament of the altar!*

Are we unable to yield to such graces in the Holy Mass because we have thought responses of this kind inappropriate for such as ourselves? Or do we unwittingly, go into “automatic” in our saying of the prayers because we have little expectancy of the action of God through them? If not these, then perhaps our fear of the opinions of those around us is preventing us from responding, should the Spirit of God move us at any point in the liturgy. Whichever it might be, it is worth reflecting on what might be holding us back from a deeper response to the action of the Lord in the Holy Mass.

I am not, of course, suggesting here any kind of exhibitionism or emotionalism but, rather, a profound attentiveness of the heart orientated to respond to the delicate or powerful action of the Spirit upon us in the liturgy.¹¹ I remember on one occasion a woman in our community began reading the first reading in the mass and was so moved she began to quietly weep and found it difficult to continue. Rather than being a distraction from the mass itself, this moment distracted me from my distractions! Her yieldedness to the power of the word drew me into to the power of the text being read, which had more or less passed me by. Was this not precisely what God’s people experienced as they witnessed similar things in the masses celebrated or attended by the Saints? As Pope Francis encouraged us, in his sermon on the feast of Corpus Christi this year, “*we need a heart that is ready, alert and welcoming... We need to enlarge our hearts*”.

I am not suggesting that God can only work upon us through conscious or purely external experiences. But it seems to me that the conscientiousness with which we are helped to improve our connection to God in personal prayer, by so many “schools” of prayer (Carmelite, Ignatian, Benedictine etc), has rarely been applied to our engagement with the Lord in the Eucharistic celebration.

People can be helped to know how to engage better with the Lord, acting in the liturgy, through greater attentiveness of heart and openness to his action upon them and how to cooperate appropriately with his action. Some resulting experiences of consolation, while not strictly speaking mystical, are even so of real value in deepening our heartfelt participation in the Holy Mass. Others may be of a higher mystical order, which no amount of human effort can produce. However our capacity to receive such mystical graces, freely granted by God when he chooses, is greatly enhanced by the habit of practicing a deep attentiveness of heart, in humility and expectant faith, in our participation of Holy Mass. The following experience, of a person well known to me, falls into the second category. *As I looked at the Holy Eucharist I suddenly beheld with my open eyes, a pure divine light emanating from it. This light was gentle and powerful at the same time. In comparison to this light all earthly lights seemed heavy and dim. By this light, I knew that here, in the Holy Eucharist, was “the ‘raw material’ of all love in the universe.*

This person is not a Saint. They are just a sincere Catholic who practices humble attentiveness of heart and expectant faith in the Holy Mass.

Such experiences, when genuine, often confirm the teaching of the Saints and the Church.

Saint Isaac the Syrian tells us “*Blessed is he that has eaten the bread of love which is Jesus.*”¹²

Saint Ignatius of Antioch, declared “*I long for the bread of God with is the flesh of Jesus Christ, and for his blood to drink which is incorruptible love.*”¹³

Saint John Vianney testifies: “*When you have received our Lord, you feel your soul purified, bathed in the love of God... the soul rests in the balm of love.*”¹⁴

Saint Pope Paul VI, quoting Saint Thomas Aquinas, taught in *Evangelica Testificatio* that the Holy Eucharist is “*the sacrament of love*” (ET 48). If the official teaching of the Church calls the Holy Eucharist the “*sacrament of love*” what is it then that we offer God the Father in the Holy Mass? What is it that pleases him? What is the sacrifice that swallows all the sin and evil of history and obtains the glory of the risen Jesus for every child of God and all creation? Was the Father

waiting with bloodthirsty anger for the torture of an innocent victim? No, surely not. But such a suspicion, even today, does remain in the back of the minds of many. If such a view is present it makes the opening of the deep heart to such a God a virtual impossibility.

Let us be clear that it is not so much the suffering of his dearly beloved son, *of itself*, that heals all creation but rather the love with which he endured it. As Saint Paul writes “*If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing*” (1Cor 14:3). Without love, all the sufferings of Jesus on the cross would have been worthless. As Hosea writes, God desires “*steadfast love and not sacrifice*” (Hos 6:6).

As previously noted, in many of the major Eucharistic miracles, the host has turned into be the flesh of a heart. This is worth contemplating upon as we offer the Holy Mass. What we offer to God is Christ’s heart, his perfect love. Every Eucharistic host is, in one real sense, a divine heart and his Eucharistic blood is, as Cabasilas writes, “*the tremendous chalice of love.*”¹⁵ God, let us remember, does not benefit from Calvary, we do. It is the love in the heart of Christ on the cross that consumes all the sin of the world and by which we are saved. This is what we offer to the Father upon all the altars of the Church, the immaculate, infinite love of Jesus. Love is the fulfilment of the whole law and the restoration of all things. On the cross and in the Eucharist sacrifice, we are saved by love, for love.

Intimacy with God through the Holy Name

We are privileged in the Catholic Church to have a deep appreciation of Christ’s real presence in the Holy Eucharist. However, God does not call us to union with him only in beautiful moments of Eucharistic intimacy. We are called to a profound intimacy with the Lord in every moment of life. When the Bible exhorts us to “*pray constantly*” or “*unceasingly*” (1Thess 5:17) it is inviting us to live a life of communion with the presence of Jesus at all times. This invitation is not just another demand to burden us, but rather the offer of living always in the experience of God’s love in ceaseless joy. Prayer is, the Catechism of the Catholic

Church reminds us in paragraph 2565, “*the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him*”. And this is a call to joy because, as Psalm 16 tells us, “*in your presence there is the fullness of joy*” (Ps 16:11).

Saint Theophane encourages us that, *as a flame increases when it is constantly fed, so prayer, made often, with the mind dwelling ever more deeply in God, arouses love in the heart. And the heart, set on fire, will warm all the inner man, will enlighten and teach him, revealing to him all its unknown and hidden wisdom, and making him like a burning seraph, always standing before God within his spirit [heart], always looking at him within his mind, and drawing from this vision the sweetness of spiritual joy.*¹⁶

There are many ways to approach such an invitation, but the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the “*invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always*” (CCC 2668). Building on this I wish to offer an approach that Pope Francis, in his general audience on June the 9th 2021, proposed to all Catholics, the practice of the Jesus Prayer. This prayer has been the backbone of my own prayer life for more than twenty-five years and has been a profound blessing and consolation in my life. The Jesus Prayer has born wonderful fruits in the lives of a multitude of sincere Christians down through the ages and manifested the very glory of God in the lives of many Saints and holy people.

While this prayer has several versions, it is commonly said in the form: “*Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.*” This can be extended, or shortened in various ways, for example, “*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner*”, or simply “*Lord Jesus, have mercy*”.

In this prayer we stand before God for ourselves and the whole cosmos. This little prayer is a prayer of immensity and power, summing up the entire gospel. As St Theophane writes: *What shall we say of this divine prayer, in invocation of the saviour, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me?” It is a prayer and a vow and a confession of faith, conferring upon us the Holy Spirit and divine gifts, cleansing the heart, driving out devils. It is the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ within us, and a fountain of spiritual reflections and divine*

*thoughts. It is remission of sins, healing of soul and body, and shining of divine illumination; it is a well of God's mercy, bestowing upon the humble revelations and initiation into the mysteries of God.*¹⁷

At the heart of this beautiful prayer is the Holy Name of Jesus. It is this particular dimension of the prayer that I shall focus on here.

In the Western world, the choice of someone's name is often as superficial as its association with a celebrity. In ancient cultures, by contrast, a name had great significance and consequence. As Metropolitan Kallistos Ware writes: *In the Old Testament, as in other ancient cultures, there is a close connection between someone's soul and his name. His personality, with its peculiarities and its energy, is in some sense present in his name... In the Hebrew tradition, to do something in the name of another, or to invoke and call upon his name, are acts of weight and potency.*¹⁸

God himself regards the name of a person as of great significance. This is illustrated when he changes the name of Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (the father of many nations). His identity, function and prophetic destiny are in his name. This renaming to express a deep truth about a person and their calling is also performed by Jesus; *"You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church"* (Matt 16:18).

So, what of the name of God himself? In the Old Testament we see how the name of God, YHWH, revealed to Moses, came to be considered so holy that it was not to be pronounced aloud. This holiest of all words was spoken, as we noted above, only once a year, by one person, in one place: on the Day of Atonement, by the High Priest, in the Holy of Holies. There are many forms of worship but calling God what he calls himself was considered unsurpassable as the highest word of prayer.

This respect for the name of God was common in both Old and New Testaments. Both the second commandment *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain"* and the first line of the Our Father *"hallowed be thy name"* reveal an exalted reverence and awe that should surround the name of God.¹⁹

We know that Christ is truly present in the Holy Eucharist but his presence and power are also active, in another different but real way, in the utterance of his name. To speak the name of God with faith is to make him dynamically present in a particular way. For his name contains

the presence it represents. This name, which was unutterable for the people of Israel, has been given to us in the Holy Name of Jesus. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* writes: *But the one name that contains everything is the one that the Son of God received in his incarnation: JESUS. The divine name may not be spoken by human lips, but by assuming our humanity the Word of God hands it over to us and we can invoke it: 'Jesus', 'YHWH saves'. The name 'Jesus' contains all: God and man and the whole economy of creation and salvation. To pray 'Jesus' is to invoke him and to call him within us. His name is the only one that contains the presence it signifies. Jesus is the Risen One, and whoever invokes the name of Jesus is welcoming the Son of God who loved him and who gave himself up for him* (CCC 2666).

As the priestly people of God reborn in Christ, and temples of his Holy Spirit, we are able to partake in the prayer of the Name. No longer restricted to one man, on one day, in one place, now every Christian can announce the all-powerful name of God through the name “Jesus” in every moment, of every day and in every place, for the glory of God and the salvation and transfiguration of all. The Catechism also states: *Jesus' resurrection glorifies the name of the Saviour God, for from that time on it is the name of Jesus that fully manifests the supreme power of the "name which is above every name" ... The name of Jesus is at the heart of Christian prayer* (CCC 434/435).

The real power of the Name is declared in the New Testament repeatedly. We see this in the promise that “*Whatever you shall ask the Father in my name he will give you*” (Jn 16:2). In the book of Acts, we read “*There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12). The awesome power of the name is seen too in the ministry of healing (Acts 3:7) and deliverance from demons (Acts 16:18) in which the sick and those tormented by demons are healed and delivered by the power of the name of Jesus. It is well attested that the possessed, during exorcisms, cannot utter the Holy Name for, as the letter to the Philippians says: *God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on the earth and under the earth* (Phil 2:9–10).

This understanding of the power of the name of Jesus was strenuously upheld in the early Church. As we read in the second-century text, *The*

*Shepherd of Hermas: "The name of the Son of God is great and boundless, and upholds the entire world."*²⁰

In the West, we find beautiful writings expressing devotion to the name of Jesus. Saint John Henry Newman wrote that: *"To holy people the very name of Jesus is a name to feed upon, a name to transport. His name can raise the dead and transfigure and beautify the living."*²¹

Similarly, Saint Bernard writes in his fifteenth sermon on the Song of Songs: *What can equal its power to refresh the harassed senses, to buttress the virtues, to add vigour to good and upright habits, to foster chaste affections? ... Jesus to me is honey in the mouth, music in the ear, a song in the heart. Again, it is a medicine. Does one of us feel sad? Let the name of Jesus come into his heart, from there let it spring to his mouth, so that shining like the dawn it may dispel all darkness and make a cloudless sky.*²²

Several other western Saints have promoted devotion to the Holy Name. Saint Francis of Assisi is said to have had a profound love of the name of Jesus. Saint Bernadine of Siena strenuously promoted devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. It was he who made popular the monogram IHS from the Greek letters for Jesus. This devotion became so popular in Italy that it was often inscribed above the doorways of houses. The Jesuits further popularised this monogram by taking it as their emblem and named their mother church in Rome "The Most Holy Name of Jesus".

The name of Jesus has been honoured in various ways in Western Christianity down through the ages. Perhaps those a little older remember their devout parents practising the habit of bowing the head a little every time the name of Jesus was spoken (a tradition formally established at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. *"Each should fulfil in himself that which is written for all, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow; whenever that glorious Name is recalled, especially during the sacred Mysteries of the Mass, everyone should bow the knees of his heart, which he can do even by a bow of his head"* Constitution 25). In the Roman Catholic Church, January has traditionally been the month of the Holy Name of Jesus, having the Feast of the Holy Name on the 3rd of that month. In addition, the Litany of the Holy Name is still in use in the Church today.

However, we in the West would have to concede, with humility, that the Eastern Church's widespread encouragement of the practice of the Jesus Prayer has successfully established devotion to the holy name of Jesus as a "Royal Way" in their spiritual tradition. The literature on the name of Jesus in the Eastern Christian tradition is now so vast it is difficult to decide on which quotations to chose. But here is just a small selection:

In the sixth century writings of Saint Barsanuphius the Great and John the Prophet we read: "*We must know that the constant invocation of the Name of God is a medicine which cures not only all the passions but also their effects.*" And "*the remembrance of the Name of God utterly destroys all that is evil.*"²³

Saint Theophane the Recluse writes "*The name of Jesus is the treasury of all good things, the treasury of strength and of life in the Spirit.*"²⁴ and "*The Name of the Lord [Jesus] by itself disperses everything alien to it and attracts everything akin.*"²⁵

In *The Philokalia* we read: "*we should use the name of Jesus as we do our own breath. For that name is light.*"²⁶

Saint John Climacus writing on the effects of prayer relates how "*some emerge from prayer as from a blazing furnace... Others come forth as if they were resplendent with light and clothed in a garment of joy*".²⁷

Saint Hesychios of Sinai in his wonderful text *On Watchfulness and Holiness*, which can be found in the first volume of the English translation of *The Philokalia*, tells us: *The more the rain falls on the earth, the softer it makes it; similarly, the more we call upon Christ's Holy Name, the greater the rejoicing and exultation it brings to the earth of our heart.*

And again: *The sun rising over the earth creates the daylight; and the venerable and Holy Name of the Lord Jesus, shining continually in the mind, gives birth to countless thoughts radiant as the sun.*

And finally: *At first, you will find that it is a ladder; then a book to be read; then as you advance, you will find that it is the heavenly city of Jerusalem, and you will have a clear spiritual vision of Christ.*²⁸

Inspired as we are by the privileges enjoyed in prayer by the Saints, let us not allow ourselves to think that something of their experience cannot

also be ours by God's mercy. Here I include, for our encouragement, the witness of some sincere people very well known to me, who are being granted beautiful graces through the faithful practice of the Jesus Prayer:

“As I prayed the Jesus Prayer in my heart, I began to experience a gentle light flooding me and causing a sweetness and joy to fill my entire being. This experience has occurred regularly and sometimes continues after my set time of prayer into the rest of my day.”

“At times when praying the Jesus Prayer, a divine heat warms my heart and a great recollection and peace fills me and I feel myself deeply connected to Jesus.”

“When praying the Jesus Prayer, whether in the chapel or even when I am driving, I often experience the sense of a pure holy light. I do not see this light with my physical eyes but with the eyes of my heart. Never the less it is a real light and fills me with a sublime joy quite different from all human joys.”

“As I prayed the Jesus Prayer in the night I began to weep with heart-broken sorrow for my sins. Then Jesus came to me and I clung to his holy feet weeping both with humility and love for two hours. In this time his presence was so strong that all of my material surroundings seemed faded and unreal in comparison. After this my prayer life completely changed.”

“At times I simply enter my heart and begin praying the Jesus Prayer and a dazzling light fills all my vision and I taste the very presence of the living God.”

“While praying the Jesus Prayer suddenly, in a way I cannot describe, I was somehow given a key to the knowledge of all things in the universe and in an instant I felt in myself the capacity to know the essence of every created thing. It seemed, in that moment, that the entire universe was within my reach and somehow known to me in God. It was an awesome and humbling experience that is impossible to explain.”

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware reminds us *“The power and glory of God are present and active in his Name”*.²⁹ The name of Jesus is the word above every word. It is the ultimate word of the Bible and perfect praise of the Holy Trinity. It is the source of life, calling the entire creation into glory. Jesus is the ultimate word of the Father, the greatest word the Spirit can bring forth from our lips. Jesus is the supreme word of history, the

infinite word, the word that animates the centre of every created thing. The first word and the final word. It is love, power, joy, peace, fire and light. Every other word stands in its shadow and every shadow flees before its glory.

Thus the name of Jesus at the heart of the Jesus Prayer, carrying the very presence it signifies, has enormous power. Infinite power. By the repeated utterance of the Holy Name of Jesus, beginning on our lips, then in the mind and finally deep within our heart transforming us into fire and light, we abide ceaselessly in the love and joy of Jesus' radiant presence. To live in the power of the Name is to dwell in the Holy of Holies and to have a heart transformed in the image of the heart of Jesus. The one who prays the Jesus prayer increasingly lives under an open heaven and is progressively transfigured into a gateway of divine mercy, power and glory.

Conclusion

In the Holy Eucharist, our merciful God has granted us his children access to the summit of love, the fullness of his holy presence. In addition, by granting us access to his most Holy Name, we carry that presence of divine love and glory into the world for the transfiguration of all. Thus, communion through sacramental presence in the Holy Eucharist and contemplative presence through the Name of Jesus powerfully enrich each other. The Mass empowers a life in the Presence and a life in the Presence, through the Holy Name, enlarges our capacity for the depths of Eucharistic love. We become people of the Presence for whom Emmanuel – God with us – is a ceaseless conscious and luminous reality filling our whole lives with divine joy.

Notes

1. *The Eucharist. Our Sanctification*, p. 33.
2. *Introducing The Orthodox Church*, p. 134.
3. SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM quoted in Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame University Press, 1956), p. 220.

4. THERESE OF LISIEUX, *The Autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux [The Story of a Soul]* (Image, 2001), p. 52.
5. PHILIP, M., *Life of Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque*, W. E. Blake & Son Limited, Toronto, 54.
6. Quoted in MANELLI, S. M., *Jesus Our Eucharstic Love*, 8.
7. Letters I, 29 March 1911.
8. Quoted in Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 1979, 102.
9. ST. AUGUSTINE, *Sermons*, 56, 6, PL38 381.
10. RATZINGER, J., *Forward to Renewal and the Powers of Darkness* by Cardinal Leon Joseph Suenens, An Arbor, MI: Servant, 1983.
11. The heart here is not referring only to the centre of our affections but the very centre of the human person. It is the inner sanctuary in which God abides and the faculty by which we know the things of God through the Holy Spirit.
12. WARE, K., *The Orthodox Way*, 109.
13. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Letter to the Romans* 7,3.
14. JOHN VIANNEY, *Instructions on the Catechism*, Ch. 12.
15. CABASILAS, *Life in Christ* III, 3, PG150, 580.
16. ST. DEMITRI OF ROSTOV, *The Inner Closet of the Heart*, Quoted in *The Art of Prayer*, 47.
17. *The Art of Prayer*, Faber and Faber, 88–89.
18. WARE, K., *The Power of the Name*, Marshall Pickering, 20.
19. Even in recent times the Vatican has released a document stating that the name of God, transcribed *Yahweh*, is not to be used in Catholic liturgical singing and translations of the Bible. It explained that to speak the Name of God in this way would contradict the long-standing tradition flowing from the earliest times in the Church. Thus, it has been stipulated that the “Proper” name of God should be replaced with Adonai, Lord.
20. *Similitudes* ix, ch. 14.
21. I've been unable to find the original source for this quote but it is widely referenced, for example on the website of the Oratorians in Bournemouth England.
22. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Sermon 15, par. 6.
23. SCHOINAS, S. (ed.), *Questions and Answers* (Volos 1960), § 693; tr. L. Regnault and P. Lemaire, Solesmes 1972, § 692.
24. SAINT THEOPHANE quoted in *The Art of Prayer*, 96.
25. SAINT THEOPHANE, *The Art of Prayer*, 187.
26. SAINT HESYCHOIS OF SINAI, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*.
27. CLIMACUS, J., *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 274–281.
28. SAINT HESYCHIOS OF SINAI, *On Watchfulness and Holiness*.
29. WARE, K., *The Power of the Name*, SLG Press, 1994, 10.